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Disarmament Commission

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New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

General exchange of views (continued)

Mr. Hahm (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the 1998 Disarmament Commission session. We are confident that under your skilled and experienced leadership we can achieve a productive outcome. Let me also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and thank Mr. García of Colombia for his outstanding work during last year's session of this Commission.

This year, three of the items that were on the agenda last year are slated for discussion again. We should do our utmost to ensure that the Commission, as a deliberative body and subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, will be able to produce useful recommendations and guidelines for the international community on the issues that fall under its mandate. Allow me now to briefly present the positions of my delegation concerning the issues on our agenda.

My delegation believes that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones are a truly effective and indispensable instrument for promoting nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building at the regional level and therefore are valuable in enhancing not only regional security, but global peace and security as well. We welcome the solid progress made over the past few years towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions around the world.

Having said that, I would like to express my Government's views on what factors are important to consider in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. First, prior consensus should be reached among the countries concerned, including any nuclear-weapon States. Secondly, consideration should be given to the relevant specific characteristics of the region in question, including its security situation and the existence of any regional security mechanisms. Thirdly, the principles of international law, including that of free navigation on the high seas, should be respected. Fourthly, the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, should not be undermined. Fifthly, a clear definition should be established for what constitutes a "geographical entity". Sixthly, an appropriate verification mechanism should be provided, *inter alia* through the application of full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards to all peaceful nuclear facilities in the zone.

With regard to the outcome of this session of the Disarmament Commission, we hope to see the formulation of guidelines based upon a practical assessment of the already established zones and rigorous deliberations regarding the relevant enhanced concepts. Through the formulation of such guidelines we can promote the ongoing efforts to establish further nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Regarding the issue of the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), my delegation's understanding is that, during last year's session, consensus was reached on the virtue of holding the special session. The Republic

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of Korea was among the many countries that voiced their support for doing so. Considering all the remarkable progress made towards non-proliferation and disarmament since the end of the cold war, as well as the fundamental shift in the political landscape that has occurred, we believe it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to set a future course of action in the fields of disarmament and arms control.

However, last year we witnessed divergent views on the objectives and the prospective agenda of the SSOD IV. It is our view that the SSOD IV should address all aspects of disarmament in a balanced manner, with equal attention given to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Furthermore, if we are to reach consensus, we should seek to be flexible about including issues and avoid excluding them.

For the convenience of our discussion and for the expediency of reaching agreement among Member States, my delegation would like to propose that the SSOD IV employ the categorization of issues outlined in the report of the Working Group.

At the SSOD IV, serious attention should also be given to newly emerging issues, such as new weapons systems arising from scientific advances, particularly in information technology, and the transfer of sensitive technology. In many respects, the drastic recent changes in both technology and international relations call for some degree of shift in our paradigm. We hope that the SSOD IV can create a forward-looking plan of action that includes an enhanced role for the United Nations in the disarmament field.

With regard to agenda item 6, namely, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", the Korean delegation supports the consensual agreement reached last year to focus on the consolidation of peace in post-conflict situations. In this regard, a clear definition of conflict should be developed. The relevant experience gained by the United Nations and other international organizations — among others, the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations — should also be emphasized in the process of formulating guidelines.

Considering the complexity of this issue and the mandate of the Disarmament Commission, it would seem practical and sensible to limit our consideration to practical disarmament measures such as the control of small arms and light weapons, the illicit arms trade and transparency in armaments. There is no denying that small arms and light weapons are the cause of most of the casualties in today's world and a prominent factor behind regional and subregional instability. My delegation endorses and attaches great importance to the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms established by the General Assembly in resolution 50/70 B. We certainly hope that the Working Group will continue its vital role in this regard.

The illicit arms trade, too, is a most disturbing and dangerous phenomenon. It has a destabilizing and destructive effect, particularly with respect to the internal situations of States. To combat the illicit arms trade, greater cooperation between States on a regional level is crucially important. We very much hope that the detailed action programme to facilitate cooperation will be instituted during this session.

The Korean delegation also holds the view that greater transparency and openness in armaments can improve confidence-building and security among States. In this context, we believe that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective measure by which to lessen mistrust, miscalculation and, thereby, potent military tension. My delegation once again strongly encourages those States which have not yet submitted annual reports for the Register to do so at the earliest possible date.

Finally, let me briefly touch upon the rationalization of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We are all aware of the criticism that the Commission's achievements have fallen short of our expectations and that the Commission has not worked as effectively as it should. In this context, my delegation welcomes the initiative taken by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, to appraise the role of the Disarmament Commission in improving itself. The Korean delegation hopes that, in line with the ongoing efforts to renew the United Nations, we can all reach a consensus on how to make the Commission a more effective and streamlined organ, and on how to conduct the Commission's session in a more productive way.

In closing, I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation is poised to play an active and productive role in achieving a successful conclusion to this session.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my

delegation, on your election as Chairman of the Commission. Your renowned knowledge of disarmament issues and your diplomatic experience augur well for the success of our work. You can count upon the active support of the delegation of Mexico in bringing our deliberations to a successful conclusion. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

This year the Disarmament Commission is considering, for the second time, the issue of the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. My delegation believes that we should pay particular attention to identifying common elements in existing treaties establishing these zones so that they can provide a frame of reference for similar legal instruments in the future, stressing in particular the objectives, scope of application, rights and obligations of the parties, verification machinery and entry into force.

Two additional elements that we should discuss relate to the mechanisms for cooperation between the agencies and executive bodies of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, and to harmonizing provisions relating to security guarantees granted by the nuclear-weapon States to the States members of these zones.

We are pleased that the example of Latin America and the Caribbean, manifested in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, whose 30 years in existence provide useful experience for work in other regions, is continuing to encourage new agreements, such as the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 52/38 S.

This is also the second year in which the Commission is considering an item on the preparation of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. Our discussions must take account of the report of the Secretary-General that was submitted during the previous Assembly session pursuant to resolution 51/45 N, as well as of the changes put forward in resolution 52/38 G on this item.

Mexico is particularly pleased to note the adoption, in the context of the Organization of American States, of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. We believe that this instrument provides useful material for preparing guidelines on regional conventional arms control measures. The text of this Convention is available in the official languages of the United Nations in document A/53/78.

The adoption by consensus of resolution 52/38 F on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament highlights the determination of the sponsors to find common ground for convening that special session. My delegation is pleased that the nuclear-weapon States have given their support to that initiative.

Reaching a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session should not be too complicated a task. I believe that essentially we all share the concern about the threat that nuclear weapons represent to the very survival of the Earth. However, we note with great concern the continuing prevalence, on the threshold of the new century, of doctrines based on nuclear deterrence, including preparations for a nuclear response to a potential attack with other kinds of weapons, which would represent the complete abandonment of the principles of necessity and proportionality.

The delegation of Mexico is convinced that, in accordance with the principles of the San Francisco Charter, the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1996 and the resolutions of the General Assembly, the international community should outline an agenda on disarmament for the next century, including all disarmament issues and the institutional machinery in this area.

We reaffirm our active support for the deliberations on identifying the objectives and the agenda for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Let us focus our energy and make clear our political will to reach an agreement. Let us give dialogue and negotiation another chance.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to begin, Sir, by warmly congratulating you, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. I am convinced that with your talent and experience, you will guide the current session to a successful conclusion. You and the other members of the Bureau can count on the full cooperation of the Chinese and other delegations. I wish also to take this opportunity to thank last session's

Chairman, Ambassador García of Colombia, for his contribution to the work of that session.

In the twentieth century, to which we are about to bid farewell, mankind has suffered through two world wars and experienced a cold war that lasted for more than four decades. Standing at the threshold of a new century, it is clear to us that peace, development, stability and cooperation have become the trend of the times. At present, there is an easing in international relations, the trend of multipolarity is gaining momentum and international arms control and disarmament continues to move forward on all levels. However, the world is far from tranquil. The cold-war mentality lingers on, threatening world peace and stability. Hegemonism and power politics are still hampering the establishment of a fair and rational new world order. Taking into account past experience and lessons learned and preparing ourselves for future opportunities and challenges, we need to cultivate a new security concept and seek new ways to maintain peace.

Experience has shown that the security concept and the security regime of the cold-war era, which were based on military alliances and an escalating arms build-up, cannot lead to a genuine peace. In today's international scenario, activities such as expanding military blocs, strengthening military alliances, retaining and even extending the policy of nuclear deterrence, and conducting research and development on new types of weapon systems that undermine global strategic balance run counter to the trend of the times and are detrimental to international peace and security.

China holds that all countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. This is the political basis and the prerequisite for international security. Every country is entitled to choose a path of development on the basis of its own national conditions. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries under any pretext, nor should any country or group of countries seek absolute security by compromising the security of others.

As the economic basis of security, all countries should, in the interest of equality and mutual benefit, strengthen trade and economic ties and promote scientific and technological cooperation, so as to narrow the development gap between countries and to achieve common prosperity. As a practical way to maintain global peace and security, all countries should enhance consultation and cooperation in the field of security, further mutual understanding and trust, and seek to settle their differences and disputes through peaceful means.

Disarmament and security are interlinked and complementary. The international community attaches great importance to the role of disarmament in the maintenance and promotion of security and is exploring ways and means to further advance the course of international disarmament. As a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament, the Disarmament Commission has for many years played a significant role in formulating guidelines in the disarmament field. Against the new international backdrop, the Commission is expected to respond to current trends and to make further contributions to the maintenance of world peace and security. China has always attached importance to the Commission's work and has participated in and contributed to every session of the Commission. The current session will continue to consider the three items of common concern to the international community on the basis of the work accomplished at the last session. We hope that the outcome of our deliberations will facilitate progress in the field of international disarmament.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) is an item of great importance to all delegations. The last three special sessions of the General Assembly on disarmament, and in particular the Final Document of SSOD I, have played an important role in guiding and promoting international disarmament. Since the end of the cold war, the international situation has changed drastically, and a series of achievements have been recorded in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament. Against such a backdrop, the Chinese delegation is of the view that it is necessary to convene SSOD IV to review the past and look to the future in order to formulate objectives and principles for international arms control and disarmament in the next century.

At the two previous sessions, in-depth discussions were conducted on issues relating to the convening of SSOD IV. Many countries, including China, have put forward a series of reasonable proposals and initiatives in this regard. Since the Disarmament Commission will conclude its consideration of this item at the current session, we hope that all countries, on the basis of the work of the two previous sessions and in the spirit of seeking common ground while putting aside differences,

will be able to reach a common understanding on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a positive role in facilitating nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, thus promoting world and regional peace, stability and security. In recent years, the area covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has expanded. Countries in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe are advocating or taking practical steps to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones. We have noted that the four existing nuclear-weapon-free zones share common objectives but differ in some ways. It would be of great value for the Disarmament Commission to sum up and utilize the positive experience acquired during the establishment and operation of such zones so as to facilitate the consolidation of existing zones and guide the establishment of new ones.

At the last session, delegations discussed the status, scope, principles and objectives of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and reached a common understanding on some guidelines for the establishment of such zones on a preliminary basis. China has always respected and supported the efforts of the non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves. China has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. Proceeding from this position, China has signed and ratified the relevant protocols to the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba.

China supports the efforts by South-East Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. We are ready to seek, along with the countries concerned — without prejudicing the territorial sovereignty, maritime rights or interests of those countries — an early settlement of the pending issues so as to facilitate the early signing of the Protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty by all States concerned, including China.

The Chinese delegation would like to reiterate that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. The countries concerned should establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves and in light of actual conditions in their respective regions. The geographical scope of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not cover continental shelves, exclusive economic zones or areas of dispute between the States within the zone and their neighboring countries over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. The status of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not be affected by any other security mechanism, and the States within the zone should not exempt themselves from their nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaty obligations under any pretext, including their membership of a military alliance. We hope that, during the current session, greater common understanding will be reached on guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The current session will also consider the item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. At the last session, delegations discussed and reached a common understanding on the scope of this item. The Chinese delegation hopes that, based on the work of the last session, deliberations will focus on practical arms control and disarmament measures to consolidate peace in regions that have suffered from conflicts. We hope that efforts will be made to achieve further progress.

We are of the view that, in light of the fact that conditions differ from region to region and that conflicts have complicated origins, it is hard to formulate universally applicable principles and measures. We can formulate measures and methods only in accordance with the specific conditions in any given region. The Chinese delegation maintains that, when building and consolidating peace in regions in conflict, it is essential to abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. When formulating and implementing practical disarmament measures, it is necessary to take into account the legitimate requirements of self-defence of the countries concerned and to proceed in accordance with agreements freely arrived at among the parties involved in conflicts. Powers outside the regions that have influence over parties to the conflicts should assume a special responsibility and obligation in promoting arms control and disarmament and in building and consolidating peace in the regions concerned.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): I take great pleasure in extending my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of this important Commission and I wish on this occasion to assure you of our full support in the accomplishment of your onerous

task. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau and to your predecessor, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, for his outstanding work at the last session.

The new prospects that have emerged in recent years in the tangible areas of disarmament and international security bear the elements of a renewed vision of peace and stability in the world. The objective of general and complete disarmament, envisaged in terms of respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality and responsibility shared among all States, has thereby been entirely rehabilitated. The emergence of strategic thinking that looks at the military factors both of the national security of States and of international security has gained in relevance and timeliness. The challenges of the future therefore hinge on the necessity of a security that is global in concept, universal in its foundation and impact, and non-discriminatory in its effects and benefits. Hence, a doctrine of collective security, originating in and inspired by the United Nations Charter, can by rights only call for a transcendence of the causes of rivalry between nuclear Powers and for a recognition, through deeds and not merely through professions of faith, of the invalidity of policies based on the balance of terror.

It is this doctrine which, in our view, advocates the emergence and dissemination of a culture of security for people and peoples, mobilizing energies and resources long absorbed by the arms race, to the benefit of the protection and promotion of the rights of all human beings, including the fundamental right to life and to live in conditions compatible with the value and dignity of the individual. Such a doctrine would aim at establishing international peace and security throughout the world, and not just in a few geographical zones deemed to be more worthy of interest than others.

It is this doctrine, indeed, which Algeria has defended everywhere and always, aware that disarmament, international security and economic and social development are an ineluctable whole and the only true foundations for peaceful and harmonious relations among nations. It is through its devotion and fidelity to this doctrine that my country — which has made many gestures over the past few years in favour of general and complete disarmament and the establishment of genuine collective security — deposited, on 11 February, the instruments of ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, commonly called the Pelindaba Treaty. We thereby became the third African State to ratify the Treaty.

In this respect, it is comforting to see that the sphere of denuclearized zones is growing ever larger, to the extent that it now binds 110 States. In the framework of that expansion, the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok Zones have been joined by the new milestone of the 1997 Almaty Declaration, aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We hope that the Middle East, a zone visited by every kind of turmoil and danger, will also one day became a free zone, so that the spectre of nuclear threat will be eliminated once and for all from that region.

Convinced that nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority on the international disarmament agenda, Algeria believes that the process of nuclear disarmament must be resolutely pursued at the bilateral and multilateral levels. While substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals are agreed upon, we feel it imperative that measures be drafted to prohibit, in all circumstances, the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State, as the International Court of Justice reminded us in its timely and historical Opinion of 8 July 1996.

While we take note of the progress made in Geneva at the first part of the 1998 substantive session with respect to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances, my country wishes to recall that the unilateral guarantees made by several States to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are an inadequate response to our security needs because they are conditional, partial and legally non-binding. That is why we must constantly emphasize that such guarantees can have their full impact only if they are formulated in their entirety in a binding legal instrument among all the nuclear Powers.

In our view too, the disarmament dynamic should be able to encompass a question that is of particular importance to a growing number of States: illicit transfers of conventional weapons, which fuel and exacerbate new, violent transboundary phenomena such as terrorism and drug trafficking. This question is neither minor nor subsidiary as it relates to the national security and stability of many countries; it is important for the international community, through its various disarmament forums, to consider this question with due urgency and to decide on measures to address it effectively.

This session of the Disarmament Commission is of particular importance, because it is our first substantive

session since the adoption of reforms and the establishment of the new Department of Disarmament Affairs, which we hope will provide the impetus that the work of this body requires. Moreover, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the year 2000 will take place in a few days' time.

Regarding the substantive issues to be considered at the present session, we are convinced that while there are certainly priorities on the disarmament agenda there are very strong links among the various agenda items; each supplements the others. It is clear that progress in one area can improve the possibility of reaching our goals in other areas. In any event, this is true for at least three of the matters that are before us.

With respect to the first substantive item, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", we are aware of the results of last session's deliberations. However promising they were, these should not make us forget that there were differences among delegations on this item. In this context, the 13 working documents submitted by delegations, plus the paper presented by the Chairman, constitute a basis for reflection, which should be further considered and which should enable us to overcome disputes and make progress on points of agreement. In paragraph 11 of the report of Working Group I on this item, six topics were identified for possible consideration during the next two sessions; we could begin with these. Additional efforts will be necessary to bridge the gaps in this area. For its part, Algeria, which chaired Working Group I last year, will strive at the present session to work in that direction.

On the item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", despite the mixed results of our work last session, we feel that our deliberations will now take place under better auspices thanks to the adoption without a vote of a resolution on this item at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The adoption of that resolution was an important step forward, and we hope it will help remove the last remaining reservations on the purposes of such a session, on the agenda, and on the costs. Members will recall that Algeria was among the States that had objected to convening such a session, for what we thought a sensible reason: the absence of one nuclear-weapon State. With the positive developments since the fifty-second session, we are now in a position to hope that long-awaited agreement on the date and organization of the special session will come about. The special session will give us all the opportunity to engage in an objective evaluation of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done to create the conditions for a safer world for succeeding generations.

Turning to the third substantive item, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", it may be useful to recall that, as I have already noted, within its geographical area, Algeria devotes the smallest portion of its gross national product to national defence; we believe that the international community should focus on conventional weapons no less than on other kinds of weapons — especially as it is these weapons which, through illicit trafficking, supply terrorist networks whose purpose is to destabilize States, destroy the values of democracy and human rights, and terrorize civilian populations.

Despite the difficulties in identifying all aspects of this question, already noted at the last meeting on this item, which focused on a number of initiatives that could be undertaken, my delegation will continue as it did last year to follow the work of the Working Group on this item, and to call for the strengthening of international cooperation in this area and for the adoption of coordinated, specific and effective measures to address the serious threat posed by the free — and especially the illicit — circulation of conventional weapons.

Let me say a few words about the Disarmament Commission itself. My country will continue fully to support this deliberative body of the General Assembly. Precisely because it is open to participation by all States Members of the Organization, it must continue to be a space for democratic debate and exchange of views, as it has always been. The encouraging results achieved at recent sessions only underscore the fact that the Commission can make a notable contribution in the sphere of disarmament.

Before — and even more so, after — the 1991 reform, the Disarmament Commission put together a considerable quantity of information, adopted recommendations that have always been appreciated, and demonstrated its usefulness and relevance by developing items before negotiations begin on them. The proposals placed before it and the in-depth discussion to which these give rise have often brought forward ideas and contributed to greater clarity. Progress in this body has stimulated and continues to stimulate bilateral efforts and

will continue to influence the work of the Conference on Disarmament. With that conviction in mind, my delegation is committed to strengthening further the effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission, to preserving its usefulness in the multilateral disarmament process, through achieving balance in the items it considers — both nuclear and conventional items — and to taking up these items in a framework that makes it possible for all delegations to participate, through avoidance of all parallel meetings.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Allow me to express the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, chairing the Disarmament Commission. Your presence here, as well as that of your predecessor, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, testifies to the importance of disarmament for the international community.

We would also like to register our satisfaction with the renewed Department for Disarmament Affairs, which, under the wise guidance of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala, will undoubtedly play a major role in the revitalization of the disarmament efforts of the United Nations.

The 1998 session of the Disarmament Commission takes place at a moment of uncertainty in the disarmament arena, which is marked by opposite trends.

The international situation offers enormous opportunities for decisive progress towards the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and above all nuclear weapons. In this respect, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons embodies a growing awareness of the fact that such barbaric devices are losing whatever pretence of legitimacy they may have possessed in the past.

Once regarded as the cornerstones of major security alliances and the symbols of great-Power status, nuclear weapons are becoming no more than an expensive and dangerous nuisance. Everywhere, civil society has become aware of the high costs associated with the maintenance of such weapons and also questions their value as a military tool. Opinion polls taken by respected institutions in the nuclear-weapon States themselves detect overwhelming majorities in favour of negotiations for a global nuclear-weapon ban.

In fact, one can safely conclude that the battle for public opinion between supporters and opponents of nuclear weaponry has already been fought and won by the latter. The strong reaction of international public opinion against the last nuclear tests would no doubt be exponentially multiplied were any State ever to test again. The international standing of such a State would be greatly diminished in this case.

Several realistic proposals for the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons have been presented, such as those of the Canberra Commission and the Group of 21 in Geneva. There is near-unanimous support for the full implementation of the non-proliferation and disarmament obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the nuclear treaties — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We warmly welcome, in this context, the ratification of the CTBT by France and the United Kingdom.

There are, however, worrisome signs that the conceptual reliance on the maintenance of a nuclear arsenal persists in some countries. Despite the commitment to the CTBT by the five nuclear Powers, computer-aided modelling of nuclear explosions and the improvement of atomic explosive devices continue. Such actions may awaken or rekindle in non-nuclear-weapon States the desire to acquire nuclear weapons.

There is a keen international expectation that commitments made under article VI of the NPT, concerning complete nuclear disarmament, will be implemented. In taking the decision to join the NPT, Brazil is determined to join in the efforts to bring that provision into reality.

The multilateral disarmament machinery is in crisis. The symptoms of such a crisis have been with us for some time. The latest unqualified success for multilateral disarmament, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), dates from five years ago. After decades of international mobilization, the CTBT had to circumvent the consensus rule of the Conference on Disarmament in order to be adopted. A cumbersome entry-into-force clause may delay for an indefinite period the consolidation of its legal status, although at least the signatory States have already committed themselves not to conduct tests. And the whole process of negotiating the anti-personnel landmine Treaty took place outside the Conference on

Disarmament, even if it had the endorsement of the General Assembly.

Brazil subscribes to those two legal instruments — the CTBT and the anti-personnel landmine Treaty — and hopes for their early entry into force and progress towards universality. However, we should be able to resort to the multilateral machinery to express universally shared values in the field of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament has been plagued by stonewalling and has not done any substantive work since it left the draft of the CTBT in the hands of the General Assembly. For the first time since the end of the cold war, there is no major disarmament treaty in the pipeline.

The Brazilian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament expressed the view that the recent agreement on the programme of work represents the lowest common denominator — it is well below the expectations of the international community. Even if the Conference on Disarmament were to agree to the start of the negotiations on a fissile-material-ban treaty, this would represent, as the Canberra Commission stated, a reinforcing step, not a concrete measure of nuclear disarmament.

If the start of the concrete work of the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament is further delayed, we should remember that nothing prevents the five nuclear-weapon States from concluding among themselves an agreement on the cut-off of fissile-material production or from submitting their enrichment and reprocessing facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

However, progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world is a matter of concern not only for the nuclear-weapon States, but also for the entire international community. One of the concrete expressions of this fact is the movement towards the consolidation and extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, the international community should encourage Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to conclude the treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia as soon as possible. The initiative of Mongolia to establish a single-country nuclear-weapon-free zone also deserves special attention. Other initiatives aimed at a nuclear-weapon-free world are certainly also welcome.

The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba already cover almost two thirds of the membership of the United Nations over more than half of the surface of the globe, including almost the entire southern hemisphere. There are crucial differences between membership in a nuclear-weapon-free zone and membership in only the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. In the case of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, the three most important differences are, first, more thorough procedures for clarification, consultation and verification, through regional mechanisms in addition to the IAEA; secondly, the non-acceptance of the stationing of foreign nuclear weapons in the territories covered by the zones; and thirdly, legally binding negative security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States. It is therefore evident that the nuclear-weapon-free zones represent, in the words of the Canberra Commission, part of the architecture that can usefully encourage and support a nuclear-weapon-free world. We expect the Disarmament Commission to develop further this principle under agenda item 4.

Under agenda item 5, the Disarmament Commission will again discuss the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). A well-prepared special session could go a long way towards preparing the United Nations to address the challenges of disarmament in a multipolar world. We look forward with great interest to the thoughts and suggestions of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala on this issue.

As regards agenda item 6, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace in the context of resolution 51/45 N, the Brazilian delegation will do its utmost to help ensure good progress during this session. We would like to point out, however, that many of the issues we will be discussing are not particularly relevant to disarmament, in that disarmament involves measures of arms reduction agreed upon among States in the areas of weapons of mass destruction and large conventional systems.

The discussion of item 6 of the agenda will involve issues such as post-conflict peace-building, the restoration of law and order in societies torn apart by internal conflict and criminal law as a tool for controlling small weapons. A particularly important initiative in this area was the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which was adopted by the Organization of American States on 13 November 1997. The text of the Convention will be circulated as a document of our meeting, at the request of the delegation of Mexico. It provides a

regional approach to the problem, which we feel could be a flexible and effective way of dealing with the subject.

Such measures in the area of conventional small arms are valuable on their own merits, but should not be considered as replacing or overtaking the disarmament agenda. The implication that we should concentrate on so-called concrete disarmament measures while giving up on weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and on major conventional disarmament, because such issues would be too difficult to tackle, does not do justice to the concrete progress that the international community has made over the last several decades in helping prevent dangers that are too horrible to countenance.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to extend warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau who have been elected to serve during this 1998 session of the Disarmament Commission. Allow me also to express the gratitude of my delegation to Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia for his exemplary guidance of our work at previous meetings.

This substantive session of the Disarmament Commission was preceded by two relevant events that surely foreshadow substantive progress in our work. On the one hand, we are beginning our work in an atmosphere of reform — and we congratulate the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Dhanapala, upon his appointment, and wish him the greatest success. On the other hand, the delegation of Argentina would like to take this opportunity to express its satisfaction to the delegations of the United Kingdom and of France for their countries' ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This is of particular relevance because they are the first nuclear-weapon States to ratify this essential instrument of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In recent years we have witnessed encouraging developments that tend to confirm that the world has changed far more than we perhaps realize or are ready to admit. However that may be, there can be no doubt that in the next millennium all of us will face a formidable challenge that we cannot ignore.

This challenge consists of developing a comprehensive view of collective security that includes, *inter alia*, sustained progress on disarmament issues, increasingly transparent positions and confidence-building and the inception of a multilateral process that will promote international cooperation with renewed vigour in order to clear the way towards development.

In view of the upcoming preparatory meeting for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we believe it useful to recall that the document adopted at the NPT Review and Extension Conference recognized once again the value of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the contribution they can make in strengthening international peace and security.

We were pleased to hear, at the beginning of this debate, that a considerable number of delegations continue to attach importance to the contents of that declaration. We hope that at the upcoming session of the First Committee a position that is consonant with this attitude will be adopted on the resolution on "The nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas". That resolution accurately reflects the principles and objectives contained in the NPT, it creates no new legal obligations, and it contravenes no provision of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Argentina encourages dialogue and cooperation among the member States of the various nuclear-weapon-free zones and on various occasions has offered to share the experience it has acquired in implementing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and through the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials as a new system for promoting confidence and equilibrium in the region.

Argentina believes that the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones requires comprehensive IAEA safeguards, the promotion of transparency in the monitoring of exports related to the peaceful use of nuclear weapons, and the adoption of domestic measures to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear weapons.

In continuing to comment on the challenge that lies ahead of us, we would note that another item is before our Committee for its consideration: the convening of another special session devoted to disarmament. We agree on the need for a new, forward-looking agenda. We believe also that in order to ensure that this session is productive it must take place in a consensus framework. A session of this kind requires careful preparation, including agreement on its objectives and an

agenda that is evenly balanced between nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament issues.

In the challenge to begin developing a comprehensive view of collective security, we must not fail to tackle the issues of conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular attention paid to peace-building. Argentina considers particularly auspicious the fact that this item is included on our agenda, and we believe that we must continue to make tangible progress on the basis of what we have already achieved.

At previous substantive sessions, concern was voiced about a possible overlap in the consideration of items that are before other United Nations bodies. While overlap must be avoided, we believe that we must also avoid working in isolation. In our view, the Disarmament Commission can benefit from the work of other groups while in turn contributing to their work.

We must move forward in building a safer and more integrated world. If we use an integrated approach, then the United Nations as a whole can respond to problems that are of concern to us all, such as disarmament and arms control.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. I am convinced that under your able chairmanship the session will successfully conclude its discussion of the agenda items, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

My delegation is of the view that, in the field of international disarmament, the main emphasis should be placed on nuclear disarmament as a matter of priority and that nuclear disarmament can be effected only when it is oriented towards the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and the denuclearization of the whole world. Therefore, my delegation will take part with special interest in discussions on the item on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones represents one of the essential ways of realizing denuclearization throughout the world, as evidenced by positive moves towards that end in various parts of the world. Against this backdrop, it is all the more imperative for the Commission to further intensify deliberations on drafting guidelines of universal character for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this regard, it is important as a matter of course to clearly define the obligations of the parties in the region or regions concerned. It is equally important that nuclear-weapon States be obliged to provide support and legal assurances for the nuclear-weapon-free zones, since such zones are inconceivable without such assurances.

The importance of defining the obligations of nuclear-weapon States has been unanimously recognized by the nuclear-weapon States themselves, to say nothing of the non-nuclear-weapon States. Consequently, a consensus could be achieved on the issue of legal assurances by nuclear-weapon States once the Commission successfully drafts the objectives, principles and criteria relating to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Because the Korean peninsula remains the most tense hot spot, its denuclearization is much more urgent than that of any other region. That is why the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made every sincere effort to that effect. However, the prospect of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula remains uncertain. Unfortunately, the issue of legal assurances by nuclear-weapon States for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula has been completely disregarded. If the Korean peninsula is to be denuclearized, the United States — a party directly responsible for peace and stability on the peninsula — should above all give legally assurances that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and rescind its commitment to provide a nuclear umbrella to South Korea, as it pledged in the joint statement issued in New York in June 1993 by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework concluded in Geneva in October 1994.

Contrary to its pledged support for a denuclearized Korean peninsula, the United States is in reality unwilling to take any legal steps. Such acts constitute a fundamental reason why the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, signed in December 1991, has not yet been implemented.

The reluctance of the United States to renounce its commitment to providing a nuclear umbrella for South Korea and to make assurances of the non-use of nuclear weapons against the DPRK is motivated by its policy of maintaining the confrontational structure of the cold-war era on the Korean peninsula.

It is generally recognized that the cold war has completely ended throughout the world and that, accordingly, the trend of change in the power structure is being manifested in the United Nations disarmament debates. However, the Korean peninsula remains the only region where the confrontation and hostility of the cold-war era persist even today. Such an abnormal situation also has severe repercussions upon the deliberations on a series of disarmament issues in the United Nations. Because of such confrontation and hostility, the sincere efforts of the DPRK to move towards disarmament, in conformity with a positive post-cold-war trend, have been gravely challenged.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has serious concerns for its security under the constant military threat of the United States, has been compelled to bear the heavy burden of the arms race against its will. Just recently, the United States took advantage of the "Iraq crisis" to reinforce sophisticated modern military equipment in South Korea and then to reorganize its 8th Army, the nucleus of its forces in South Korea, into a field-army system.

In the presence of a huge, ever-increasing military build-up, who on Earth can dare to deny that the DPRK is the direct victim of such military adventures? In a situation such as that prevailing on the Korean peninsula, mere lip service to arms reduction and military confidence-building is nothing but a smokescreen to camouflage the real intention to pursue an arms race and can be construed only as part of ongoing attempts to disarm the Democratic People's Republic of Korea unilaterally.

In actual fact, military threat is incompatible with disarmament; similarly, the goal of disarmament cannot be achieved unless it is accompanied by the sincere willingness of all belligerent parties. The realization of both denuclearization and disarmament, which are of vital significance in ensuring durable peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, will absolutely depend on whether or not the confrontational structure of the cold-war era is dismantled in the region.

From this point of view, my delegation believes that the time has now come for the United Nations to take appropriate measures conducive to the dissolution of the confrontational relations of the cold-war era in the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Granovskiy (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation is pleased to welcome and congratulate the representative of Belarus, a State to which we are linked by very strong and historical ties of friendship, on his election to the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session. We are convinced that his ability and experience, including in the area of multilateral disarmament, will allow us successfully to pursue the work begun by his predecessors, which we hope will lead to very meaningful results. Of course, he can count on the willingness of our delegation to help him in every possible way in carrying out his weighty tasks.

I should also like to thank his predecessor, Ambassador García of Colombia, for his successful work at last year's session.

International life is becoming ever more clearly multipolar and disarmament is a part of that process. Multilateral disarmament forums are acquiring a new dimension and the disarmament agenda is becoming ever more saturated, covering new areas of the world and new types of armaments. A graphic example of this phenomenon are the questions to which answers must be sought at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

Allow me to share our approaches to the items under discussion. Russia advocates the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various areas of the world as an important factor in narrowing the geographic extent of the presence of nuclear weapons and in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the optimal way to obtain additional security guarantees for non-nuclear countries. At present, approximately 100 non-nuclear States that participate in these zones have received guarantees, with legally binding force, against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this context, the regional aspect of the search for additional security guarantees on the basis of nuclear-weapon-free zones deserves our support.

In this respect, it is important that the agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones be in accordance with generally recognized international criteria and guarantee fully the non-nuclear status of the regions they cover. Careful work will be required on the following issues: the precise definition of the zone's geographical configuration; the obligations of the States participants; and the conditions of its establishment, including prohibition of the transit of nuclear weapons through the territories it covers.

We support the approach whereby the establishment of a "classic" nuclear-weapon-free zone is accompanied by additional disarmament measures — for instance, that proposed by the countries of the Middle East, encompassing other types of weapons of mass destruction over and above nuclear weapons; or, as proposed by the Republic of Belarus, a non-nuclear area in Central and Eastern Europe accompanied by an obligation not to accumulate conventional weapons in the region.

Questions on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament require careful consideration. I believe that we have a consensus on the need for careful preparations for the special session, the convening of which will be significant only if it results in the adoption of a meaningful document based on contemporary realities.

We believe that the forum could achieve its objective if its main task is to try to impose not specific time-bound schedules for disarmament for individual countries, while leaving other countries as outside observers, but a reasonable balance between the range of problems related to weapons of mass destruction and questions linked to conventional weapons.

In recent years, a great deal of practical work has been done to reduce nuclear arsenals. START I and START II have been concluded and agreements have been reached on further, even deeper cuts in the future under START III. The involvement of other nuclear Powers in the negotiations on nuclear disarmament is also timely. In that context, I would draw attention to the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation on the drafting by the five nuclear States of a treaty on nuclear security and strategic stability, the conclusion of which would lay a solid foundation for solving a range of problems. It is precisely the experience in real disarmament that demonstrates that the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons are possible only through a gradual, phased evolution that preserves strategic stability.

I would also recall that a certain amount of time is needed to achieve bilateral agreements within the START process, to complete future negotiations among the Five, and to implement five-way agreements on future nuclear-weapons reductions. Only when we have gone through all these interim stages will it be possible, probably on a multilateral basis, to discuss the question of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Here a legitimate question arises: Is it really possible today to address seriously something that might not become a reality even in the first decade of the twenty-first century? That is why we believe that proposals to begin negotiations on a programme of nuclear disarmament within a specific time-frame are unrealistic.

Still, there are aspects of nuclear disarmament where conditions are ripe for undertaking meaningful negotiations. In our view, negotiations could begin immediately in the Conference on Disarmament on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

In our view, a major focus of a special session should be regional disarmament, along with the range of issues relating to formulating and refining an integrated strategy for international controls and for the relevant multilateral machinery.

Closely related to these issues is the third substantive item on our agenda: "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". We are pleased that it has been possible to deal with sometimes thorny questions of the limitation of conventional weapons in Europe in a constructive, non-confrontational way. We stress the importance of renewing the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and adapting it to new realities.

We consider that one of the disarmament issues on which the United Nations can play a leading role is the problem of landmines. Russia advocates the adoption of practical measures to prevent and manage armed conflicts as one of the most effective ways of combatting the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines. It goes without saying that the joint efforts of States involved in humanitarian demining should be stepped up; we are prepared to act together with the United Nations in this sphere.

But we cannot support a simplistic approach to this question; full responsibility cannot be placed upon producer countries, and the problem cannot be solved with the hasty stroke of a pen, almost entirely reflecting the views of one group of countries while ignoring the legitimate concerns of others. Past practice shows that the most effective approach is through concerted measures with specific implementation machinery.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you,

Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We convey our congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation further congratulates Ambassador Andelfo García on the fine way in which he guided the work of the Commission at its last session.

The Disarmament Commission is meeting in a good international climate. Some of its features are the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, progress on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and, even more important, measures — insufficient though they be to date — that have been adopted on the reduction of nuclear weapons. These are positive signs that should not be overlooked and that should be reflected in the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Nonetheless, the question of general and complete disarmament under effective international control continues to be of high priority in international relations. The Commission must therefore continue to carry out its fundamental jobs: encouraging negotiations on curbing the arms race in all its aspects; promoting the process of genuine disarmament on an internationally agreed basis; building confidence among States; and bringing about a relaxation of international tension. An essential aspect of this work is promoting appropriate verification measures that will be satisfactory to the States directly concerned.

We must not forget that peace and development are indivisible. It is essential therefore that our work should take account of the need to devote a major part of the resources freed by disarmament to the economic and social development of developing countries, and in particular to their scientific and technological progress.

The Commission's agenda contains three substantive items, to which special consideration was given at the last session: we can turn to the work that has been done as a point of reference and of departure.

The delegation of Ecuador has always supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Using the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) as an example, Ecuador views such zones as an effective means of strengthening peace and security among their member States and as a step towards general and complete disarmament — which means that nuclear-weapon States must respect the full scope and implications of the zones. Ecuador believes that there are three elements that must underlie the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones: the free will of the States of the region concerned; the special characteristics of each region, especially its geographic, political, economic, social and other conditions, because these must determine the modalities of the zone; and the need to define needed verification and control measures, without which the zones would exist only as theoretical declarations.

Here, my delegation supports the paper presented by the Chairman that appears in annex I of the report of the Disarmament Commission, document A/52/42. We lay special stress on the four points set out in paragraph 2 of that paper as elements that deserve to be taken into account in our discussions.

In line with the proposal made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Ecuador supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In that connection, it is encouraging that at its fifty-second session the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/38 F by consensus. We hope that consensus will be reached also on the objectives of a fourth special session. In general terms, we believe that the basic purpose should be to define future measures on disarmament and related security issues — in other words, to consider and assess the international situation in the context of the fundamental changes that have taken place on disarmament issues since the end of the cold war. If that is the central objective, it should be possible to prepare an agenda and define the items that would be addressed at a fourth special session. My delegation agrees also that it should be possible to move forward in considering the paper presented by the Chairman on this item at the last session, which is contained in annex II of the report to which I referred some moments ago.

On the question of conventional arms control/limitation, my delegation is concerned at the proliferation and spread of such weapons, which are murderous tools in the many confrontations now taking place all over the world.

Therefore, we maintain that measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional weapons must be considered. We have welcomed and supported without reservation the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which is in harmony

with the declaration of the American continent as a landmine-free zone.

On the other hand, we believe that it is necessary to promote compliance with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We maintain that regional disarmament needs to be supplemented by measures and initiatives for conventional disarmament on a global scale. We would also like to reiterate our concern about imbalances in arms among States in the same region, because these imbalances, far from promoting the greater security of the countries with the greater stocks, wind up increasing the insecurity of the whole region by provoking reckless arms races. This problem, which most affects the smaller States that have lesser military means, can be resolved only by means of regional disarmament agreements, on the grounds that these imbalances cause instability and insecurity.

On the understanding that guidelines in this regard cannot be mandatory, my delegation believes that the Commission should study concrete disarmament measures relevant to conflicts on the verge of settlement and conflicts that have recently ended and, therefore, to the prevention of the resumption of conflicts.

In accordance with resolution 52/40 B, in which the General Assembly recommended that the Disarmament Commission study mechanisms for improving its working methods, we must begin from the principle that the fundamental purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and that the Organization is the only universal forum in which all Member States contribute to the disarmament process. Accordingly, the United Nations must play a central role in the consideration and adoption of a comprehensive disarmament programme, taking into account the fact that this is the responsibility of all States.

Thus it must be reaffirmed that the Disarmament Commission, as a specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, has the role of facilitating substantive deliberations that can lead to the submission of concrete recommendations on specific disarmament issues. If this is the case, then it is necessary to promote appropriate coordination among the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament — bodies that, in one way or another, deal with similar issues.

It follows from this that one of the effective means of improving the working methods of the Commission would be to ensure that States become firmly convinced that no progress can be made on disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security if States do not strictly abide by the objectives of the Charter and by other generally accepted principles of international law. In this context it is indispensable for all due efforts to be made to ensure — by peaceful means exclusively — the just settlement of existing controversies, since they sustain tensions and suspicions and thus will frustrate all disarmament efforts.

Such a settlement will lead to the promotion of confidence-building measures in the political, military, economic, social, humanitarian and cultural spheres. The purpose of such measures must be to enhance peace and security and to contribute to the prevention of any kind of armed confrontation, threats of nuclear war in particular. Confidence-building must be directed towards reducing the dangers inherent in misunderstandings related to military activities, helping to prevent armed confrontation and covert preparations for aggression, and reducing the danger of surprise attacks and accidental outbreaks of war.

In sum, if we want the Commission to intensify and improve its working methods, we must call upon all States — particularly those with the largest nuclear arsenals which consequently have the greatest responsibility to promote nuclear disarmament — to give their political support to such measures, because without their support our recommendations will be in vain.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): Congratulations on your election, Sir, to the chair of the Disarmament Commission at this session. Please be assured that my delegation and also my colleague, Mr. Leslie Gumbi, who will be serving as one of the Vice-Chairmen, will work with you to ensure the success of our deliberations.

The South African Government firmly believes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. It is our conviction that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. We in Africa are particularly proud of the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, and it is a pleasure for

me to announce to this Commission that South Africa deposited its instrument of ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, who is the depositary of the Treaty, on 27 March 1998. The Pelindaba Treaty, which had been an ideal since the 1960s, has, as of February this year, been signed by 49 African States, and the relevant protocols have been signed by all of the nuclear-weapon States.

We use this opportunity to again call on the only remaining State that has territory within the zone and has not yet signed and ratified the Treaty protocol that applies to it, to do so as soon as possible. We also call on all of the signatories to the Treaty and its protocols to ratify these instruments as soon as possible.

South Africa also welcomes the initiative of the States of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. The Almaty Declaration, in which Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan endorsed the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, provided the impetus for the holding of the international conference on this initiative in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during September 1997, where the strategy for achieving this nuclear-weapon-free zone was deliberated. South Africa was pleased and honoured to have been a participant at that conference and will continue to support the resolute steps of the Central Asian States who are striving to build a safer region.

My delegation points to the initiative of the States of Central Asia as proof that the idea of cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones is not a lofty and unattainable ideal; it is a practical reality. Our delegation encourages all States to provide all support possible to the finalization of the establishment of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. The importance of this cooperation was captured by the President of Uzbekistan when he said that each nation in Central Asia is conscious of its own degree of responsibility for the region's destiny, that they do not ignore developments that are going on beyond Central Asia, and that they want to take part in the constructive process of world-building so as to hasten the time when people in all the corners of the world will have guaranteed security.

In this spirit of responsibility for one's destiny and in a bid to hasten guaranteed security for people in all corners of the world, my Government also renews its call for the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions where they do not exist, such as the Middle East and South Asia.

In this regard, at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the States parties reached general agreement on a number of points. Among these, they welcomed the steps taken since 1995 to conclude further nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and reaffirmed their conviction that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States concerned enhances global and regional peace and security. The parties recognized the importance attached by signatories and States parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok to establishing a mechanism for cooperation among the respective Treaty agencies.

A continuing concern for the cause of nuclear-weapon-free zones was shown by the vote on the resolution on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas at the fifty-first and fifty-second sessions of the General Assembly. South Africa will continue to work to achieve consensus on this important resolution.

On the subject of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), it will be recalled that the Non-Aligned Movement provided a constructive input on this issue so as to give it impetus. South Africa recalls the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/38 F, in which the Assembly decided, subject to the emergence of a consensus on the objectives and agenda, to convene its fourth special session on disarmament. It endorsed the recommendation of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 substantive session that the item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament" should be included in the Commission's agenda at its 1998 session and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", and, subject to the outcome of the deliberations at the 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, to set an exact date for and to decide on organizational matters relating to the convening of the special session.

As was the case last year, South Africa will, at this session, continue to play a constructive role in the firm conviction that consensus on the objectives of SSOD IV is essential to the convening of such a special session. We are also pleased that resolution 52/38 F was adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1997 without a

vote. Now that there is an international consensus to convene SSOD IV, we are in a position to cease concentrating on this debate, which had proved to be divisive, and to focus our attention on reaching agreement on the session's objectives and agenda.

It is not just the threat that is constituted by all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery that is of serious concern to my Government, but also the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence. We were therefore gratified at the progress at our 1997 session on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament. The progress achieved in this field is appropriate given the increasing attention to the issue of small arms by the international community and regional organizations, for example the Organization of American States. Conventional weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering in conflicts around the world today, and it is thus promising to see that a greater emphasis is beginning to be placed on conventional armaments in disarmament forums. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which are gained from various peace and democratization initiatives are curtailed by the proliferation of these arms and light weapons.

The magnitude of the problem is such that only through appropriate national, regional and international action can the effects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, be curtailed. What is required is a political commitment from countries to address this issue as a priority.

Small arms proliferation, because of its links to criminal activities, political conflict and socio-economic problems, should not be addressed in isolation. Any measures taken will have to form part of those efforts aimed at curtailing other crimes. A holistic approach should be adopted to stem this proliferation problem. Regionally, political leaders should commit themselves to solving this problem through effective regional cooperation and security action, addressing the underlying demand factors such as criminal activities and socio-economic underdevelopment. In addition, countries should, in a transparent manner, exercise strict control over the transfer of conventional arms.

My delegation circulated a paper at the 1997 session of the Commission which provided further detail on the South African Government policy on and approach to conventional arms control. At this session we will be circulating a paper in Working Group III on the South African Government policy on transparency in armaments.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Commission at its 1998 substantive session. We are confident that your experience and your dedication in the field of disarmament will contribute to an objective outcome and that, during the session, we will be able to achieve what we all desire. We also extend our congratulations to other members of the Bureau. We should also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the former Chairman, Mr. García of Colombia, for his work during the previous session.

This year's session acquires very specific importance and significance in the wake of strengthening the United Nations Centre for Disarmament Affairs by renaming it the Department for Disarmament Affairs. We would also like to reaffirm that the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction must be the priorities of this Department. My delegation would like to extend its congratulations to Mr. Dhanapala on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General of the Department, and we wish him every success.

The Disarmament Commission is the negotiating forum of the General Assembly entrusted with disarmament. We support the work of this multilateral machinery, and we believe that within the Commission countries will be able to reach consensus, and that harmony can be achieved in the Working Groups to ensure a positive outcome that will have a wide-ranging impact on all areas of universal disarmament. In this context, my delegation would also like to support the practice of considering three items every three years, so that we can carefully study every item that is on the agenda of the Commission.

The three items on our agenda for this session demonstrate the great importance placed by the international community on their discussion. In this respect, allow me to refer to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which states that the specific characteristics of nuclear weapons, particularly their destructive power, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come, render them potentially catastrophic. The Court also stated that the destructive

power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time, and that they have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. In addition, the advisory opinion found that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Syrian Arab Republic, on the basis of its policy of promoting international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and within a general perspective of complete and general disarmament, has spared no effort in supporting United Nations resolutions on disarmament.

In 1968, Syria became a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has since committed itself to the Treaty's system of guarantees. It has stated repeatedly that it supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as well as in other areas. Furthermore, at the 1989 Paris Conference on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Syria was the first to propose declaring the Middle East a region free from all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological, within the framework of the United Nations.

Our goal was to provide succeeding generations with a stable and secure world — a world in which people will not have to witness another dark period in the history of humankind like the one that saw nuclear weapons used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, the new and more technologically advanced nuclear weapons are more destructive and certain to cause even greater destruction.

Syria has always affirmed its keen interest in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We would like to reiterate our deep concern at the serious obstacle to the establishment of that region posed by Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT. Israel continues to refuse to accede to that Treaty in spite of the fact that all the countries in the Middle East have done so, leaving Israel alone a non-party to that Treaty. Israel continues to refuse to join, in spite of the fact that the international community has taken note repeatedly of the fact that this stubborn refusal is seriously harming the credibility and the universality of the NPT and is in practical terms preventing the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

How is it possible, then, to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East if Israel does not accede to the NPT? Israel is the only party that has yet to join the Treaty and the only party that is determined to maintain, increase and develop its nuclear arsenal.

How can we put an end to the nuclear arms race in the Middle East? How can we establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region when Israel, alone in the area, has a military nuclear programme that is outside the NPT's international regime? This programme represents a grave threat to the safety and security of the people of the area now and in the future.

Israel's position reveals its lack of seriousness and its attempts to evade United Nations efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region, in particular when it calls for sterile and useless unilateral negotiations with each and every country. Indeed, it is impossible to free any area in the world from nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction unless all parties agree on the mechanism to be used, their objective and their commitment.

Renouncing nuclear weapons is the true guarantee of international peace and security. We expect that the international community represented in this Commission, if it is serious about reaching a fruitful outcome at this session, will call on Israel to renounce the option of nuclear weapons and to start taking practical and serious steps to place its nuclear installations under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards for inspection, monitoring and control, and to accede to the NPT.

My country strongly supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) as an opportunity to review all aspects of disarmament in the context of the current international scenario and to draw the attention of the international community to the importance and necessity of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and reducing conventional weapons. We believe that the main priorities provided for in the Final Document of SSOD I continue to reflect a broad international consensus.

In keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, we call for the limitation of the production, stockpiling and development of conventional weapons, while taking into account the legitimate and inalienable rights of peoples to self-defence, resistance to foreign occupation and self-determination. Furthermore, the countries with the largest arsenals of weapons must work towards substantially reducing their production and

stockpiles of conventional weapons in order to promote international peace and security.

In this respect, I should like to refer to the special importance of transparency in the field of armaments. The present system and the present United Nations Register fall short of taking care of the concerns of the majority of Member States. Balance is required, but in order for it to be successful it must be comprehensive, and it must include information on not only the export of certain types of arms but also on the production, use and stockpiling of all types of weapons. This is the required and just level of transparency.

Finally, we wish you, Mr. Chairman, every success in conducting the 1998 substantive session. You can be assured of our full cooperation.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session. Your election is a tribute to your country and to you personally. In the same vein, I would like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election. My delegation pledges full cooperation with you and the Bureau in our common endeavour to achieve concrete results on the issues on the agenda of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission.

The United Nations Charter has accorded the highest priority to the maintenance of international peace and security. The importance of the mandate of the Disarmament Commission cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. As a prerequisite for the attainment of international peace and security, general and complete disarmament must therefore be placed at the forefront of the endeavours of the United Nations.

Tanzania's position on nuclear disarmament has always been consistent. We attach the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament and call on nuclear-weapon States to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace has acquired increasing significance in the overall context of regional disarmament initiatives. Tanzania, a signatory to the Pelindaba Treaty, is guided by its conviction that such steps will strengthen regional peace and security and contribute to comprehensive efforts towards general and complete disarmament.

With regard to the item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace, my delegation supports legitimate measures which are genuinely intended to regulate the transfer of small arms and light weapons. Consequently, any measure aimed at putting an end to the illicit arms trade will have our full support. Such measures, however, should not prejudice the transfer of small arms necessary for the security concerns of smaller nations, most of which maintain relatively low levels of armaments for their legitimate defence needs.

My delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to determine the future course of action in the field of disarmament and related security matters for the next millennium. Tanzania urges all States Members of the United Nations to coordinate their efforts in pursuing the objectives of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. My delegation remains optimistic that this session will reach a compromise on this item.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that this Commission provides the universal forum for charting out the best course and path towards our goals and objectives, as laid down in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Let us therefore all work together to advance the goals that we can collectively subscribe to in the search for international peace and security.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman: I interrupt the general exchange of views to resume some organizational business. As members know, we have yet to elect two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of African States, two from the Group of Asian States and one from the Group of Western European and Other States, as well as to select Chairmen for Working Groups II and III, on agenda items 5 and 6 respectively.

At this stage I am pleased to inform members that the Chairmen of the respective regional groups have communicated to me that the Group of African States nominates Algeria and South Africa for the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1998. The Group of Asian States nominates Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic for the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Commission. The

Group of Western European and other States nominates Luxembourg for the post of Vice-Chairman.

Accordingly, if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation the representatives of Algeria, South Africa, Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Luxembourg as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: With regard to the chairmanships of the Working Groups, I am pleased to inform the Commission that the Chairman of the Group of Asian States has communicated to me that the Group has a nomination for the post of Chairman of Working Group II on agenda item 5, "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". At this juncture I would like to give the floor to the representative of India for the presentation of the Asian candidate.

Ms. Kunadi (India): Since I am taking the floor for the first time, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. Of course I will have an opportunity to congratulate you more formally in my statement this afternoon.

As a result of consultations in the Asian Group, I am pleased to inform you that the Asian Group has agreed by consensus to nominate Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia, for the chairmanship of Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission for the 1998 session.

It will be recalled that Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat also chaired Working Group II during the last session, and we feel that his reappointment would provide continuity to the work of that group.

The Chairman: Thus, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, the representative of Indonesia, has been nominated for the post of Chairman of Working Group II on agenda item 5.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to appoint Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat as the Chairman of Working Group II.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have also been informed that the Group of African States has a nomination for the post of Chairman of Working Group III, on agenda item 6, concerning conventional weapons.

To present the nominee from the Group of African States, I call on the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. N'Gam (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor, allow me to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Commission.

The African Group has decided by consensus to nominate the Permanent Representative of Uganda for the Chairmanship of Working Group III, on agenda item 6, concerning conventional weapons.

The Chairman: Thus, the Ambassador of Uganda, Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, has been nominated for the post of Chairman of Working Group III, on agenda item 6.

If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission wishes to appoint Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka as Chairman of Working Group III.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: May I, on behalf of the members of the Commission, extend warm congratulations to all the elected officers and wish them, especially the Chairmen of the Working Groups, luck in discharging their difficult duties.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.